

What's In A Name? By Micahel Petersen

*“The big stumbling block is what the name of this new institution would be...they did not want Marymount in the main name. This was LU not LMU.”
Renee Harrangue, on the Merger*

It is May of 1974, and the newly merged Loyola Marymount University is about to have its first graduation. To celebrate, a pillar has been put up at the entrance on Loyola Boulevard, with big iron letters that read: “Loyola Marymount University”. But not everyone is excited about the new sign. Among the Loyola boys especially, there is some discontent. They have Loyola sweatshirts, Loyola transcripts and Loyola memories. Jesuits educated them in the tradition of the school’s namesake, St. Ignatius of Loyola. Why did Marymount, a small and relatively unknown girl’s school, get to show up and change the name of their beloved University?

On the night before graduation, some of these Loyola boys decided to take matters into their own hands. Four years ago they entered Loyola University, and they are determined to graduate from Loyola University, no matter what the new administration says. Dennis (’74) and Beatrice Delja, (’75) who graduated from Loyola and Marymount respectively, remember the time well. “So without names being mentioned, some of the men decided to go out at 3:00 in the morning and remove the Marymount from the pillar,” Beatrice recalled, “The next morning when everyone came for graduation the pillar said Loyola University.” “As it should,” Dennis added, with a smile. Where he was that night, he won’t say. But there is an iron “A” hanging in his living room.

As the graduation of 1974 illustrates, the merger and subsequent name change of Loyola University and Marymount College created plenty of friction. For several years, from the fall of 1968 until the spring of 1973, Loyola University and Marymount College coexisted on the same campus, operating as two separate entities. “’68 to ’73 were like an engagement period. We were getting used to knowing each other and being together,” says Renee Harrangue, a Marymount sister and faculty member.

But in 1973 the engagement ended, and it was time to negotiate the details of what a merged school would actually look like. Barbara Busse, the current Dean of the College of Communications and Fine Arts, was a Marymount professor during the merger. She remembers the tension. “Although we were both Catholic universities and there were some shared understandings of the mission of the two places, they still have their own history, their own rituals, and their own sense of themselves,” she said, “How would we establish a joined identity?”

Complicating the process, Loyola and Marymount each had their own complete set of overlapping administrations. Each school had their own separate and unique seal. They each had a president: Fr. Charles Casassa of Loyola, and Sister Raymond McKay of Marymount. But the new school only needed one administration, one seal, and one president. And once that was all settled, there was the name. What would the newly merged University be called?

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Many at Loyola were determined to protect the tradition of Loyola University. They were happy to let the women come aboard, but they were not about to let them change the name. After all, Loyola was the bigger school, with roughly ten times as many students as Marymount. Loyola had a rich tradition, going back to the school's founding in 1911, and the Jesuit order, the leaders of the school, had an even deeper tradition going back hundreds of years. And it was Loyola's campus. They had only let Marymount move in a few years prior.

On the other side, the sisters of Marymount were determined to preserve their own history and heritage. They were not going to stand by and let their school and their identity be absorbed into the larger Loyola and be forgotten. Harrangue distinctly remembers the mantra of Sister McKay during the negotiations: "No Marymount, no merger."

Barbara Busse recalls the Thursday lunch meetings the Marymount faculty would have: "Every single lunch we were talking about it because this was our livelihood," she said. As history shows, the Marymount faculty had good reason for concern: in the merging of the two schools, several, including Barbara Busse, lost their jobs. "All of them were women. All of them were from Marymount College," she said.

Despite such significant upheavals, over time, as the negotiations and meetings continued, things slowly came together. A new seal was created, combining the old mottos of Loyola and Marymount. Sister McKay stepped down as president, and Fr. Casassa became the head of the newly joined schools. And after much deliberation, the official name became Loyola Marymount University.

But the conflict didn't end there. Many alumni were outraged. "In the first years it was very hard because you had men who had graduated from Loyola University, the alumni or you had women who graduated from Marymount College...It was very hard. We had to spend a lot of time saying this is Loyola, this is Marymount, and you all belong here," Harrangue said.

Dennis Branconier, 1975 graduate and Director of Alumni Relations from 1983-1986, frequently heard from alumni upset about the name change, a decade after it happened. "They still love the place, but it bothered the heck out of them that the university took the beloved words, Loyola University, yanked them apart from each other, [and] slammed a nine letter word in the middle that was not very manly sounding," Branconier said. During the merger, Barbara Busse's husband, Jay Busse, was a faculty member at Loyola. He waged his own little rebellion against the name change: "You could keep using the stationary of your college or university until you ran out of the supply," Busse said, "So Jay ordered a huge closet full of [Loyola] stationary and he was one of the last holdouts. He used it far, far into the next decade."

Now, almost forty years later, it looks like acceptance has grown. Explaining this shift, Branconier noted, "Those guys took it hard, and I think what happened over time is eventually they had kids that grew up and went to college...and guess where they went?"

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Loyola Marymount University, so, you know, there's some healing that's taken place over time." But for Dennis and Beatrice Delja, who have seen all four of their kids graduate from LMU since the merger, the argument continues — and neither one is giving an inch. As Dennis asserts, "Loyola is based on Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit organization, and there are Loyola Universities all over the United States. There's only one Loyola Marymount University, and I think that it weakens the name." In response, Beatrice counters, "I think it strengthens the name because Marymount brings such a strong tradition of arts, and it's a lot better, Loyola Marymount. We're not just another Loyola University. There's only one LMU."

Perhaps this debate may never end...